

THE NEW YORK SATURDAY PRESS.

VOL. I.—NO. 10.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 25, 1858.

PRICE, 5 CENTS.

The New York Saturday Press.

AN
Independent Journal of the Times,
IS PUBLISHED
Every Saturday Morning,
AT NO. 9 SPRUCE STREET, NEW YORK.

HENRY CLAPP, Jr., *Editor*.
T. H. ALDRICH,

Terms—\$2 00 a year; Five Cents a single number.

ADVERTISEMENTS,
10 Cents a line for 1 insertion.
25 " " " 4 insertions.
75 " " " 12 insertions.

Specimens Copies will be sent to any part of the Union on the receipt of five cents in postage stamp.

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY L. T. COLEBROOK.

The shepherds went their hasty way,
And found the lonely stable-hed.
Wherein the virgin-mother lay:

And now the virgin's eager tread:
For to the babe, that at her bosom clung,
A mother's song the virgin-mother sang.

They told her how a glorious light,
Streaming from a heavenly throng,
Around them shone, suspending night.

While nearer than a mother's song,
Blissed angels heralded the glorious birth,
"Glory to God on high!" and "Peace on earth!"

She listened to the tide divine.
And closer still the babe she press'd;

And when she cried—"The babe is mine."

The milk rushed faster to her breast:

Joy rose within her, like a summer morn:

Peace, "Peace on Earth!" The "Prince of Peace" is born.

The mother of the "Prince of Peace,"

Peace, simple, quiet, of her angelic birth,

That should venial, little cause,

Oh why should she sit so awhile?

Sweet mother's loudest note, the poet's story—

Did not her love to hear of home and play?

And is not war a youthful king,

A sturdy hero clad in mail?

Rebels his footstep leaves spring;

His earth's majestic monarchs fall

Their friend, their playmate! and his bold bright eye

Compels the malice's love-confusing sight.

Tell this in some more country scene,

To make and youth in robes of state!

I am a woman poor and meek,

And therefore is my soul stale.

War is a ruffian, all with guile, guile,

That from the aged father bears his child!

A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,

He kills the sire, and starves the son;

The husband kills, and from her board

Steals all his widow's toll has won;

Plunder God's world of beauty; reads away

At safety from the night, all comfort from the day.

Then wistly is my soul state.

That strife should vanish, battle cease;

I'm poor and of a low estate,

The mother of the "Prince of Peace";

Joy rises in me like a summer's morn:

Peace, "Peace on Earth!" The "Prince of Peace" is born!

THREE OF A TRADE,

OR RED LITTLE KRIS KRINGLE.

The city was muffled in snow, and looked as calm, and pale, and stately, as a queen in her crimson robes.

It was night, and the tinkling of innumerable sleigh-bells made the frosty air musical. The sleighs themselves sped silently through the streets, painted blackly against the white snow as they passed, like so many phantoms winging their way to a festival on the Brocken mountaintain.

It was late, for the corner groceries were shut. The last draught of poison had been drained over the counter. The last victim had staggered home to his trembling wife. The red, unwholesome light that flared over the door had been extinguished, and the bar-keeper was snoring in his bed behind the flour barrels.

In the bleak shelter afforded by the projecting wooden awning of one of the corner-groceries in Greenwich street, close to where the thoroughfare nears the river, and huddled up against the side of the large coal-bin that stood humped and padlocked on one side of the entrance, two little figures were visible in the dim glimmer of the night. Two little children they were, sitting with their cold arms embracing each other, their chill cheeks pressed together, and their large weary eyes looking out languidly into the black street.

Down by the wharves they saw the tall slender masts of ships piercing the sky like the reared lances of some band of gigantic Ossians. Among the black hulls a few late lights still shone, and the air rang occasionally with the voice of a drunken sailor, who from his high door-step, where he had involuntarily cast anchor, chanted his experiences of a young West Indian lady of color, who reported to the birthplace name of Andy Brown.

Presently a single, muffled sound, and down the arched skies upon the city, "Woo-woo," came from old Trinity, ringing the Old Year out

and the New Year in. The thrilling notes of the changes following each other in measured flow, vibrated through the air like music made by the feet of marching angels. They jubilantly seemed to scale the slope of Heaven. The wild melodious clangor floated over the great silent city. Myriads of aerial Moors, clashing their cymbals, seemed to march over the house-tops. The clock was trembling on the stroke of twelve, and Time had one foot already in the territories of the New Year.

"Tip, listen to the bells," said one of the two children, that were huddled beneath the grocery-awning, speaking in a faint though clear voice, like a bell heard in a fog, "listen. It is time for Kris Kringle to come."

"Come, Kris Kringle," continued Binnie, beckoning to the dwarf, "come in out of the snow."

"Maybe he don't speak English, Binnie," suggested the imaginative Tip.

This was a new view of the case, and Binnie began to consider within himself whether, by some inspiration of the moment, he might not suddenly master the particular foreign tongue with which their new friend was acquainted, when, suddenly, the little man made a swift leap and landed right in Tip's lap.

"Why, Binnie!" cried Tip, "it's not Kris Kringle after all; it's only a monkey!"

"Coffee and cakes wouldn't be bad," said Tip, hesitatingly, as if rather afraid of the consequences if he allowed his imagination to run away with him.

"A plate of roast beef rare, with potatoes and peach pie," suggested the more reckless Binnie, "just such as mother used to give us on Sunday. Poor mother!"

"What are we going to do to-morrow, Binnie, resolutely. "We'll go into Union Square early and ask all around at the houses whether they want the side-walk cleared. Some of 'em are sure to give us a quarter; we might make fifty cents, and then wouldn't we have a time!"

"Shove on of the stoops," answered Binnie, "just as mother used to do. It's a slow poison,"—perhaps one of the slowest poisons in the world—but that is one of its charms. It is so pleasant to be poisoned without knowing it!

To see whole nations slowly dying out while increasing every day in population and strength.

To see men of only six mortal feet unconsciously "dying by inches," for sixty years! To be "underminding one's constitution" every hour, and yet at the end of half a century be as straight and stiff as a Norway pine!

I admit that the delicious Mocha is a "slow

poison"—perhaps one of the slowest poisons in the world—but that is one of its charms. It is so pleasant to be poisoned without knowing it!

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I ask pardon of the whole physiological crew, while I confess that according to all their most orthodox doctrines, and in obedience to their most infallible calculations I ought to have died a quarter of a century ago at least; and if I had had sufficient reverence for their melancholy science, I should have done so, if only for the "good of the cause." The man who wouldn't willingly die that such a noble race might be saved, as the reprobate who didn't relish the idea of being damned that other folk might be saved. But mankind is so selfish!

Tobacco alone, my dear reader, killed me, according to the physiologists, before I was one-and-twenty. According to the same authority I have, for an indefinite period, "died daily," as St. Paul said, of strong tea. In fact, most of my infirmities, in company with myself, have been, in the indelible statistics of mor-

tal statistics, want there to assemble, a hundred times. How to excuse oneself under such circumstances for being alive, (in the vulgar, unscientific sense of the word,) and thus to make the *assassins* to the numerous class of mortally offended "ologists, is rather a delicate question, which I therefore dismiss without further notice, and return to what was to have been the theme of this chapter, namely, the Coffee Concert.

Then a dream came to Binnie and Tip. Red Kris Kringle jumped up suddenly from his rest in their bosom, clad in the brightest finery. A wondrous white egret's plume waved in his cap, and he wore a breastplate of diamonds. His red coat was redder than the blossoms of the wild Lobelia, and his sword was blunted with gold. Then he said to the boys, "Boys, you have been very kind to me, and sheltered me when it was cold, so now ye shall come with me to the sweet land of the South, where ye shall idle in the sunshine forever and ever!"

Then he led them down to the wharf near by, where, moored among the black hulls of the ships, they found a beautiful golden boat, so bright with many-colored flags that it seemed as if tall masts had swept the rainbows from the sky. Fairy music sounded as the sails were set, and they sailed and sailed and sailed until they landed on the sweet Southern shore.

There they found strange trees with leaves of satin and fruits of gold. Wonderful birds shot like stars from bough to bough. The river sang like musical instruments. From the limbs of the trees trailed brilliant tapetures of orchidaceous flowers, which, with their roots in the air, snaked the sunlight into their secret veins, until their blossoms were covered with the splendor of Day. Here red little Kris Kringle led them to the foot of a huge tree covered with white flowers, and made them lie down while he fed them with fruits of a magical flavor. The sun shone cheerfully on their heads. The birds sang their pleasant songs. The huge tree raised its white blossoms on them, as they doffed off to sleep weary with delight, until they repose beneath its shade.

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